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WATER RESOURCES PROGRAM SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS

A blueprint to ease this country's existing water shortage and to provide the water needs for a population of 200,000,000 by 1975 is contained in a Water Resources Policy report approved and sent to Congress today by President Eisenhower.

The report was prepared by a Cabinet committee appointed by the President May 26, 1954. Its members were Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay, chairman; Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson and Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson.

This is the first time that a program for water resources has been developed by and has the support of all the Federal water resource agencies.

The Department of Commerce, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Bureau of the Budget, Len Jordan, former Governor of Idaho and now head of the United States Section of the International Joint Commission, and General J. S. Bragdon, Special Assistant to the President for Public Works Planning, also participated in the deliberations of the committee, and the report was approved by the Department of Justice.

"The policies we adopt for the development of our water resources," Mr. Eisenhower reminded Congress, "will have a profound effect in the years to come upon our domestic, agricultural and industrial economy".

Stressed in the report is the need for complete cooperation and coordination among all Federal, State and local agencies in planning the development of water resources.

The committee found this:

"The greatest single weakness in the Federal Government's activities in the field of water resource development is the lack of cooperation and coordination of the Federal agencies with each other and with the States and local interests."

SUMMARY

To correct this condition, the committee recommends:

1. That the position of Coordinator of Water Resources be established to provide Presidential direction in development of water resources.
2. That a Board of Review, independent of the Federal agencies, be created to analyze the engineering and economic feasibility of projects and report to the President through the Coordinator.
3. That regional or river basin water resources committees be formed with a permanent nonvoting chairman appointed by the President and with membership composed of representatives of all Federal departments and States involved.
4. That a permanent Federal Interagency Advisory Committee on Water Resources be established under the chairmanship of the Coordinator composed of principal policy-making officials of agencies concerned in water resources development.

The committee found that there is definitely a water problem in the United States but there is just as certainly an answer.

"The basic elements of a sound policy relating to water are clear," the report states.

"That policy must look toward an adequate water supply for our people, prevent waste of water, provide for a greater reuse of water, reduce water pollution to the lowest practicable level, provide means for the useful and equitable distribution of available water supply, and take steps to check the destructive forces of water which threaten to injure or destroy land, property and human life."

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

To carry out this policy, the committee recommends:

1. That the collection of basic data (such as measurement of rainfall, stream flows, geology and hydrology) be accelerated and expanded and that the Federal Government increase its expenditures on this program from \$40,000,000 to \$80,000,000 a year.
2. That planning for water resources and related developments be conducted on a cooperative basis by all Federal, State and local agencies concerned.
3. That the principles which recognize water rights as property rights be accepted, and that a study be made by the Federal Government in collaboration with State and local interests to determine the relationships between property rights to water and social and economic development of the area and the Nation.
4. That no system of relative priorities for use of water be applied uniformly to the entire country because of the differing water uses and problems in different regions of the country.
5. That evaluation of water projects by all agencies be on a uniform basis so that they are comparable and that each purpose of the project bears its own share of the costs and shares equitably.
6. That each major water resources project be authorized separately by Congress.
7. That, as a general policy, all interests participate in the cost of water resources development projects in accordance with the measure of their benefits and that the Federal Government assume the cost of that part of projects where the benefits are national and widespread.

The report, which represents 20 months of painstaking study and consideration in a field that is both intricate and controversial, warns that "we cannot blindly follow the patterns and traditions of the past" and that there is no single national water problem.

"There is," the committee states, "no single uniform policy, no magic formula relating to water resources which can be applied to all parts of the country at all times and in all places.

"The problems involve particular needs and uses of water which vary from State to State and region to region.

"In one place, the problem may be flood control; in another, navigation; in another, inadequate domestic supplies; in another, inadequate agricultural supplies; and in still another, stream pollution.

"Frequently water needs and uses are in conflict with each other. The changing pattern of the economy of the regions, and shifts and growth of population, require flexibility in policy so that the plans may be adjusted to the economic requirements of the area."

The average American citizen, particularly the city dweller, takes his water supply for granted, the report points out. He uses it for numerous household tasks. He uses it to water his lawn. He uses it to wash his car.

This average American citizen might be surprised to know that for each member of his family more than 145 gallons of water is provided each day by the public water supply. His per capita share of total national use--which includes industrial and agricultural use--amounts to 1,200 gallons per day.

An estimated 200,000,000,000 gallons of water are used every day in this country--on the farms and in the homes, in factories and business establishments.

Of course, little of this water is actually consumed, but it must be available when and where needed.

Such products as steel, gasoline and paper figure in the daily lives of every American.

Few citizens are aware of these statistics of manufacture:

To produce one ton of finished steel requires 65,000 gallons of water.

To produce one gallon of gasoline requires six gallons of water.

To produce one ton of paper requires 50,000 gallons of water.

"In spite of the staggering proportions of our present use," the report states, "the estimates of future needs are even greater. The demand for water increases in proportion to the increase of population and the expansion of industrialization.

"It is estimated that the Nation's population, which has increased from 75,000,000 in 1900 to more than 165,000,000 today, will reach at least 200,000,000 by 1975; and that industrial production, which has increased eightfold since 1900, will again almost double by 1975.

"New uses, such as air-conditioning, will increase water consumption in homes and commercial establishments to an estimated per capita consumption of 175 gallons per day from public water supply.

"More water will also be used by industry as new process are developed.

"And, lastly, supplemental irrigation use in the normally humid eastern portion of the country now amounts to over 2,000,000 acres, a threefold increase since 1940."

The report estimates that the national water need by 1975, when the population is expected to reach 200,000,000, will be 350,000,000,000 gallons daily.

"While there is sufficient water to meet this tremendous need," the committee assures, "it is obvious that to do so successfully, there must be a substantial advance toward the ultimate goal of making beneficial use of every drop of water from the Continental Divide to the sea.

"This is too great a task for any one person or groups of persons or for any one level of government. It will require the continuing efforts of all levels of government and of the many private interests concerned.

"In fact, it would be no exaggeration to say each American citizen must bear some responsibility for the sound development of the Nation's water supply."

Although the problem can be solved--in fact, must be solved to accommodate our population growth--the committee found that this country is now experiencing the first symptoms of a water shortage.

"Shortages of water for domestic and agricultural use are frequent," the committee report reveals. "Industry is finding it increasingly difficult to locate adequate water supplies. Many streams are seriously polluted.

"Concurrently, tremendous losses in water are being experienced through wasteful practices and failure properly to conserve available supplies.

"Lack of adequate planning threatens to impose a water scarcity which can become a limiting factor on the growth of some of our cities, while at the same time flood damage in many areas continues to be great."

The committee notes, too, that there have been "wide differences of opinion" as to how the Nation's water problems should be met.

"It is a good omen," the committee reports, "that these differences are so generally discussed.

"All areas of government have evinced wide interest in these problems."

The Cabinet committee report contains eight sections, each devoted to a major recommendation.

Section 1 deals with the collection and evaluation of basic data needed in the development of water resources.

"For any problem involving water use and development," the report explains, "it is necessary to know when and how much water is available in a given area and how it is distributed. This involves the study of amounts and distribution of rainfall, the flow of rivers, the occurrence of water in the ground, the nature of the rocks and the soil, and other characteristics of both land and water."

Such information is vital in every stage of the planning, design, construction and operation of water development projects, the report points out.

The committee recommends a greatly accelerated program for the collection of this basic data. This program would also include a study of the role played by fish and wildlife in river basin development.

"The basic data program acceleration recommended by the committee," the report says, "would require within the next five years doubling of the present annual rate of Federal appropriations, that is, from approximately \$40,000,000 to \$80,000,000."

"This increase would represent only two percent of the amount of annual Federal expenditures alone on natural resources."

Sections 2 and 3 of the report are concerned with planning of water development projects and an organization to supervise this planning.

"It should be made clear," the committee points out, "that there is no 'national' water problem. Instead there are nationwide problems relating to the use and development of water resources which vary widely between different section of the country and frequently between local areas."

"The problems include provision for adequate supply and distribution, establishment of priorities for use in event of scarcity, protection from flood damage, improvement of navigation, preservation of scenic and recreational values, preservation of fish and wildlife, and abatement of water pollution."

A uniform national blueprint for water resource development is neither practicable nor desirable in the view of the committee.

"Each area," the report declares, "must be considered in the light of its own present and anticipated problems. These can be solved only by planning for the future as intelligently as possible."

"This planning should represent collective judgment based upon all available information of what is most needed for the river basin, the State, the region, and the Nation."

The ultimate goal of planning, the committee believes, must be this:

"The best utilization of all water resources from the time precipitation falls upon the land until the water again finds its way to the sea."

The committee finds that the present inadequacy of coordination among the various Federal agencies involved in water control and development programs is due in large part to the fact that each is operating under separate pieces of legislation, each with a differing objective.

To bring about greater coordination among the Federal agencies, as well as State and local interests, the committee recommends that water resources committees at regional or river basin level be established from time to time for such purposes and duration as are required.

Each committee would be headed by a permanent nonvoting chairman appointed by the President. Each Federal agency with water responsibility in the area and each State affected would have one representative on the committee.

The committee would serve as a mechanism through which the various agencies would prepare and publish joint plans.

Action on specific projects of joint plans, however, would be taken by the appropriate agency or agencies.

The chairmen of the water resources committees would be responsible to the the Coordinator of Water Resources who would be appointed by the President.

The Coordinator of Water Resources would be a newly created position in the Executive Office of the President.

While this official would not assume the budgetary, fiscal or legislative policy review functions of the Bureau of the Budget, he would cooperate with the Bureau and the Council of Economic Advisors in the evaluation of departmental requests for appropriations.

He would also assist in the reconciliation of water resources policy with other Federal agencies and would report annually to the President on development of the Nation's water and related land resources.

Generally, he would take the lead in establishing principles, standards and procedures to be followed by the Federal agencies in the planning and development of water resources projects.

He would also serve as chairman of a proposed Inter-Agency Committee on Water Resources.

This committee would be advisory in character and its members would include the head (or a principal policy-making official of not less than assistant secretary rank) of the Departments of Agriculture, Army, Commerce, Health, Education and Welfare, and Interior, and the Federal Power Commission.

The committee would coordinate interrelated functions of the various Federal agencies and would be authorized to make final determinations in interagency relationships.

It would also serve as a channel for advice between the White House and Federal representatives on the water resources committees.

The committee also recommends the creation of a Board of Review for Water Resources which would advise the President on decisions affecting water resources projects.

The board's function would be to make a completely impartial study of the engineering and economic feasibility of proposed projects.

The members, who would be appointed by the President, would be totally separated from any of the Federal agencies. They would include leading engineers, economists, lawyers and other experts in the resources field.

Creation of a Review Board has been recommended by practically every organization and government commission which has studied the water resources problem.

These include the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, the Engineers Joint Council, the National Wildlife Federation, the American Farm Bureau, the first Hoover Commission, the Water Resources Policy Commission, the Missouri Basin Survey Commission and the Materials Policy Commission.

Turning its attention to Federal, State and local relationships in respect to the use and control of water, the committee notes that determination of water rights vary throughout the country.

This is principally because conditions in the western States differ from those in eastern States. In the arid and semiarid west, water must be stored during periods of rainfall to meet demands of the dry seasons.

In the west a rule was evolved permitting whoever first applied water for beneficial purposes, whether it be for domestic, agricultural, mining or manufacturing, to a prior right to use of the water even though he might not own the land adjacent to the stream.

This practice ripened into the principle of prior appropriation of rights to use of water, thus establishing a property right.

"The principles which recognize water rights as property rights should be accepted," the report states. "Determinations as to disposition of water should recognize such rights.

However, the committee recommends that the Federal Government in collaboration with the States and local interests make a study to determine:

1. The relationships between the establishment of property rights to water and the economic and social development of the Nation and its regions, and of the States and their communities.

2. The principles and criteria to be incorporated into Federal, State and local laws upon which rights to the appropriation and use of water could be established that would assure the best and most effective use and control of water to meet current and long-range needs, and that would encourage maximum participation by all interested parties.

"The ownership and use of underground water," the report adds, "are so closely related to surface land titles that any regulations relating to underground water should remain strictly a matter of State concern."

However, the committee suggests that the States give serious consideration to the enactment of legislation regarding the ownership, right to use, purposes of use, and place of use of such underground water because few of the States have adopted a policy for regulating the use of such waters.

The committee also recommends that where differences arise between States over use and control of water interstate compacts be negotiated to resolve these differences.

Pointing to the differing uses of water between the eastern and western portions of the country, the committee declares that it is convinced that no statement of relative priorities for the use of water can be made which is applicable to the entire country.

For example, high on the priority list in the 17 Western States are stock watering and irrigation.

The report states that such a pattern is "obviously not applicable" in most of the Eastern States where the major problems include industrial use and stream pollution.

In attempting to set up a method for the evaluation of the numerous water resources projects proposed throughout the United States, the committee finds there are many benefits not readily expressed in monetary terms which must be considered.

The development of uniform standards for the treatment of these intangible values, the committee says, has been difficult and controversial.

"Many water resources developments," states the report, "have been largely responsible for the settlement of large areas where today there are substantial cities, which in turn represent large and diversified business investments, all contributing materially to the national economy.

"Likewise, great indirect, or secondary benefits have stemmed, under some circumstances, from the removal of the threat of floods, from the development of navigation, and from the intensified productivity of land."

On the other hand, the report notes, there are often equally important tangible and intangible detriments or damages associated with project development.

Communities may be disrupted, valuable land and mineral deposits may be flooded, there may be adverse effects upon fish and wildlife, scenic values may be lessened and local taxing units may be hit hard by the removal of land to tax-exempt status.

The committee says that it "recognizes fully that such intangible benefits and detriments do exist, and that they must be taken into account in determining the wisdom of proceeding with many proposed projects."

The committee suggests that all evaluations by all agencies be prepared on a uniform basis, which has not heretofore been true.

Its report says further:

"It is important that uniform standards be used by all agencies for allocating costs of multiple-purpose water resources development projects among the project purposes in such manner that each purpose bears its own share of the costs and shares equitably in the savings resulting from being part of a multiple-purpose project.

"The committee endorses for general use the separate costs-remaining benefits method of cost allocation as previously adopted by Federal agencies. Costs represented by expenditures to mitigate damages to existing resources and facilities should be equitably allocated among the project purposes."

The committee has also recommended that each water resources project be authorized by Congress.

At the present time, procedures for obtaining legal authorization of projects differ among the various Federal agencies.

On this the committee states:

"The basic steps in the development of any water resources projects are, in order, field investigation, preparation of a report, and a request for authorization.

"If congressional authorization is obtained, there follow annual requests for appropriations to construct the project. It is believed that as to all major projects, each of these steps should be under the control of Congress."

Lastly, the committee deals with the all-important question of who will pay the bills for development of water resources.

"As a general policy," the report declares, "the Federal Government should not build any such project, or part thereof, that can, under fair and reasonable terms, be built by non-Federal interests, except those projects of primary national concern, where non-Federal interests are unable adequately to provide the need."

The committee states bluntly that the Federal Government cannot assume the entire responsibility for development of the Nation's water resources because this is a "practical impossibility."

It feels also that such a philosophy "would tend to create local and regional dependence upon Federal action, to destroy individual and local initiative, to destroy the effectiveness of the Government of the States, and to work a profound and undesirable change in our traditional plan of Government."

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